

7th Street Campus Task Force

Executive Summary

A full report and illustrated presentation will follow at a public meeting on January 14, 2014. A final presentation has been scheduled for the city council on January 23, 2014.

In late summer of 2013, the Taylor Independent School District announced their intention to dispose of the property described here as the 7th Street Campus (also known as Taylor's Old Middle School and Taylor's Old High School). The issue of to whom the property might be delegated and for what use was of concern to the homeowners in the immediate vicinity of the property. While the members of the Taylor city staff were clear that the city does not own the property and could see no use for it, community members appealed to their sense of community stewardship in investigating viable sustainable uses that could respect the cultural and historical nature of the property. In response to their appeal, Mayor Jesse Ancira asked Councilman Brandt Rydell to create a task force to investigate appropriate, viable alternative uses for the school. This is a summary of the task force efforts and recommendations.

Acknowledging previous investigations as well as the broader community interests and creativity inherent in local residents, three community workshops were organized. Workshops, open to all, included a report from Komatsu Engineers who have pronounced the structure in excellent condition. A tour of the buildings and the campus was conducted by alumnae Pat Helbert. Other workshops encouraged interactions between participants to generate ideas for the property's future use. As three viable ideas consistently emerged, a steering committee of eight members was organized to investigate the success of similar such projects and research their potential and viability for the Taylor community.

The Komatsu report indicates the size of the SSC is approximately:

1. Total: 48,000 sf
2. Annex: 18,000sf
3. Auditorium 6,900 sf
4. Senior Center: 6,500 sf
5. Gym: 6,500 sf
6. Basement: 2,000 sf
7. Main Building: 30,500 sf *

**The Main Building square footage contains the current Senior Center and the Basement, but does not contain the Auditorium. Hence, the Main Building is about 21,900 sf total or about 10,950 sf on each floor when the Senior Center and Basement are not included in the total.*

As new purposes for the 7th Street Campus emerged and were articulated, inherent in each of these purposes was the desire to keep the social and cultural facilities now available in the main building. Such facilities include the senior center, the food bank, a thrift store, a quilt guild, and a variety of artist and dance studios. Further, with each proposal is the intention that any renovation or repurposing work includes provision for optimizing and generating renewable energy.

Research regarding other communities facing the need for repurposing similar properties provided both emotional and academic support to the efforts of the task force. Twelve major cities have repurposed 267 schools and still have 327 on hand. The Pew Charitable Trust Report has identified the following uses for these repurposed facilities:

1. Charter Schools 42%
2. Government/ non-profit 22%
3. Other Educational 12%
4. Residential 10%
5. Other 5%
6. Still to be determined 9%

Three purposes were identified and prioritized at the Taylor community workshops:

- 1.) A municipal/government building
- 2.) A vocational/technical school
- 3.) Senior housing with a focus on healthy living.

A comparison of the three identified new purposes for the 7th Street Campus revealed both strengths and weakness of each.

	City Hall	Vocational, Technical Education	Senior Housing
Vision	A centralized city complex for all city services	Educational facility teaching skills in plumbing, electricity, and HVAC supporting workforce development	Affordable, healthy living for aging in place A destination of choice
Benefits	Frees current City Hall for use by Temple College & Legacy Centralizes city offices	Meets local industry needs Serves workforce vocational needs New sources of revenue for city	Location is ideal: central & residential Meets need of Taylor aging demographic and Compliments City Comprehensive Plan New job creation New sources of revenue for city Historic rehabilitation tax credits
Challenges	Existing City Hall is adequate 7 th St. Campus not on Main Street Funding sources: taxpayers	Unclear ownership No support from TISD Would not take full advantage of available space. Requires collaboration with larger entity (funding potential below)	Unclear ownership Primarily private funding Sources still to be identified
Similar Project	Pasco, WA, Cleburne, TX Darlington, WI		Albuquerque, NM** Charleston, WV Park Hills, MO
Funding Potential	Community Development Block Grants Bonds issued by city THC Grants, USDA Grant	TAMU, UT, Texas Assoc of Plumbers TX Assoc of Electricians TX Assoc of HVAC Technicians TX Workforce Development Agency	USDA Rural Communities Development Initiative US Dept HUD Local Banks Private, non-profits organizations Federal Tax Credits

**** An impressive number of companies have substantial experience in developing and funding repurposed historical buildings for senior housing. Their work will be described and illustrated at the community meeting and in the final report to the council on January 23.**

Recommendations of the 7th Street Task Force

It is the consensus of the members of the task force that any one of these three options can be made viable and would be an asset to the City of Taylor. Further, it is the opinion of the task force that the purposes are not mutually exclusive. However, these opinions and new understandings alone are not sufficient for saving this valuable, historical building or implementing a successful repurposing. **Action must be taken.** It is the recommendation of the taskforce that the city council take the above three proposed options under advisement with the following action steps:

1. Negotiate with the Taylor Independent School District to acquire the property
- 2a. Assign a qualified staff member or new hire to act as a project manager with the sole objective of recruiting an appropriate developer (as described in the following report).
- Or,
- 2b. Working with a Community Taskforce to create and seek funding as a separate entity (501c3?) which could hire a project manager governed by a board of directors. As defined above, this project manager would be responsible for seeing the project through to completion.
3. Negotiate with the TISD to maintain the property at the current level for one more year while the City organizes to create the necessary position and obtain funding.